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2-Month Inquiry by F.B.I. Fails to Find Source of Disclosures

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 23 — A two-month-old investigation ordered by President Reagan has failed to determine who disclosed information about United States military options in Lebanon, Administration officials said today.

Several officials said further that they doubted the Federal Bureau of Investigation would succeed in uncovering the sources of the information given to news organizations in September. But they said the inquiry would at least have the effect of warning people in the Administration against giving out classified material.

According to the officials, the investigation was the most widespread attempt by President Reagan to clamp down on unauthorized "leaks" to the news media.

They said it had entailed interviews by F.B.I. agents with Secretary of State George P. Shultz; Defense Secretary Caspar W. Weinberger; William J. Casey, Director of Central Intelligence; James A. Baker 3d, the White House chief of staff, and others.

An Administration official, remarking that it was extraordinary for the F.B.I. to interview such senior officials, emphasized that the investigation was criminal, not civil, in nature and therefore all the more explosive. He would not discuss what criminal violations might have taken place.

By several accounts, the investigation has raised tensions and suspicions at the White House and created enormous controversy over its advisability. Several Administration officials, asking not to be identified, deplored it.

One official said it was "entirely possible" that wiretaps had been authorized for both Administration aides and news reporters.

Administration officials said Mr. Reagan had authorized the investigation in a letter to Attorney General William French Smith. The letter was described by officials as ambiguous with regard to the means the F.B.I. could use in its inquiry.

It could not be determined today whether the bureau had tried to use polygraph, or lie-detector tests, or

whether there was any truth to the suggestion that telephone taps had been authorized.

Danger to McFarlane

Edwin Meese 3d, the White House counselor, told reporters today that the investigation began because of Mr. Reagan's concern that disclosures about American military actions endangered the safety and mission of Robert C. McFarlane, who in September was the special Middle East envoy. Mr. McFarlane has since become Mr. Reagan's national security adviser.

Administration officials said that William P. Clark, then the national security adviser, instigated the investigation after news reports that Mr. McFarlane had urged American military retaliation against antigovernment forces in Lebanon.

Mr. Meese, the only official who agreed to be quoted by name in discussing the investigation, said the fear was that the articles would "add to the jeopardy" that Mr. McFarlane felt in his diplomacy involving constant travel to Syria, Lebanon, Israel and other places in the Middle East.

"The President was concerned that there appeared that a criminal law had been violated, and so he made the request for an investigation," Mr. Meese told reporters in Santa Barbara, Calif., where he was staying with Mr. Reagan for the Thanksgiving holiday.

An unusual aspect of the investigation appeared to be that it centered, not on accounts of the military plans themselves in Lebanon, but on the report that Mr. McFarlane had recommended military action.

Security Council Accounts

The articles in question were said today to have followed a National Security Council meeting Sept. 12, several days after United States warships began shelling the hills southeast of Beirut. From those hills, Druse militiamen had been firing on the area where American Marines were based.

Throughout this period, American officials warned that the United States would take actions to defend the Marines. At the time, Administration officials seemed to be wanting to get the word out that the naval shelling might

continue and that it might be supplemented by air strikes.

According to Administration officials today, these particular reports did not alarm Mr. Clark or others. Rather, they were said to be alarmed by some reports at the time, including one in The Washington Post and on some television broadcasts, that Mr. McFarlane had urged this course of action.

An Administration official said there was widespread skepticism in the Administration of Mr. Clark's argument that Mr. McFarlane's life might have been in danger because of these news reports. Another official said Mr. Clark suspected that Mr. Baker, "or someone associated with him," had given out the information.

Clark 'Overreacted'

Still another official said that Mr. Clark had "overreacted" and created needless internal suspicions. Mr. Clark, who was sworn in this week as Interior Secretary, was at his ranch in San Luis Obispo and not available for comment, according to his Interior Department office.

A White House official described the investigation as "a typical shot across the bow" by Mr. Clark, who had a long history of disputes with colleagues at the White House over unauthorized disclosures of information and other matters. Another official said Mr. Clark had found an ally in Mr. Meese in getting Mr. Reagan to approve the probe.

The official said Mr. Clark himself had submitted to an F.B.I. interview.

Unauthorized disclosures would be prosecuted as violations of the Espionage Act or as theft of Government property, according to an Administration report last year.